

SOCIALIST STUDIES

NO. 22

CONTENTS INCLUDE:

FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM

THE SPGB & REFORMS

THE "SOCIALIST" PARTY & FEMINISM

ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM

THE CHARITY SEASON

**OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF
THE SOCIALIST PARTY
OF GREAT BRITAIN**

**Communications to: General Secretary, 71 Ashbourne Court,
Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB**

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

OBJECT

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e., land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce, and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

ALL ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO...
The Socialist Party of Great Britain,
71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

FROM CAPITALISM TO SOCIALISM

The Socialist Party of Great Britain places a particular emphasis on the inseparability of democratic means and ends. The objective of Socialist political action is quite straightforward: it is the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. The raw resources of the planet, factories, machines, communications systems, transport and distribution points etc. will be under the democratic control of society as a whole. Production and distribution will be carried out by free men and women to satisfy social needs - not to realise a profit. Within Socialist society there will be no employment (or unemployment), no wages or salaries, no buying or selling, and no state machinery to protect the exploitation of one class by another. Socialism will be a classless society of equals living in comfort and harmony.

The means to get to this objective are a little bit more difficult. To attain Socialism requires a socialist majority aware of and desiring Socialism. There first has to be a revolution in thinking about society. A socialist revolution can only be achieved by a conscious socialist majority. The main role of the S.P.G.B. therefore is to make socialists. As we stated in our 1962 pamphlet:

"...the faint-hearted may shy away, aghast at the prospect of trying to convince the world's workers of the need for socialism. It may seem an enormous task but there is no choice in the matter. Socialism depends upon the conscious support of its people.

Unless people understand socialism and want it, they will never establish it." (The Case For Socialism SPGB page 42)

So what does it mean to have socialist awareness? What distinguishes the socialist from the mere critic of capitalism? There are three inseparable components. First there is the understanding of capitalism as a class system based upon exploitation. Then there is the recognition that economists, politicians and social reforms can never make capitalism work in the interests of the whole of society.(unemployment, war, class conflict, poverty etc. arise out of commodity production and exchange) Lastly there is the appreciation that it is the class struggle which is ultimately the driving force which will lead to the conquest of political power. With this understanding comes next an active desire to want to establish Socialism

We are often asked by our opponents how Socialism will work. We need only point out that capitalism works because of co-operative social labour, even though it is corrupted by the profit motive and waste caused by competition and exploitation. It is after all the working class who socially design, produce and distribute throughout the entire productive process of capitalism. Freed from the constraints of capital, what is there to stop socialist production and distribution taking place, given the existence of millions of socialists? Absolutely nothing! Our opponents' questions are pseudo questions, posed by those bewitched by capital and the myths associated with the ruling class ideas which currently prevail in society, and sustain the class system.

Finally, linked with the first and second aspects of socialist awareness is the acceptance of the political means by which

Socialism is achieved. All three components work together and cannot be considered in isolation. They form the politics of Socialism and are reflected in the S.P.G.B's Declaration of Principles.

We make no excuses about the size of the Party nor about the disappointing level of socialist awareness this century. However the greatest recruiting officer for Socialism is capitalism itself. Socialist ideas exist because of the conflict between what society could produce and what capitalism allows to be produced; the conflict between the forces of production and the social relations of production. It is because capitalism fails the working class that there is dissent, questioning of ideas and beliefs, a search for alternative answers to problems and consideration of different ways to organise production and distribution.

With this in mind we can return to the question of means and ends. It is one of our Principles that the revolution must be carried out by the working class taking conscious and political action themselves. This means the absence of leaders and the followers. Workers must act and think for themselves.

"....it is upon the working class that the working class must rely for their emancipation. Valuable work must be done by individuals, and this work may necessarily raise them to prominence, but it is not to individuals, either of the working class or the capitalist class, that the toilers must look. The movement for freedom must be a working class movement. It must depend upon the working class vitality and intelligence and strength. Until the knowledge and experience of the working class are equal to the task of revolution there can be no emancipation for them"

(The Socialist Party - Its Principles & Policy page 22-3)

Awareness by itself, though, achieves nothing. Neither does political action. So what direction should a socialist majority take? Knowing that the insoluble social problems emanate from capitalism and that political power is located in Parliament, it can organise, as Marx suggested it should, into a political party. The only practical and possible means to the socialist end requires a socialist majority organised in a democratic socialist political party, whose aim is to gain hold of political power through parliamentary action.

It is necessary for the socialist majority to control Parliament because the institution of private property ownership and control is backed by the machinery of government, which is in turn controlled by Parliament. Therefore to abolish capitalism and establish Socialism, a socialist majority through Parliament, must gain control of the machinery of government including the police and armed forces. This is why the political direction of the S.P.G.B. is towards Parliament, not to form a Socialist government, as some of our more ignorant opponents claim, but to ensure that the forces of the state including the armed forces, are not used against the socialist majority as production for profit gives way to production for use.

Some, including the Clapham based Socialist Party, have claimed that the role of socialist delegates elected to Parliament is only to formally abolish class rule. The S.P.G.B.'s position is more practical than this. In Clause 6 of our Principles we state that the machinery of government, under the control of the socialist majority through its delegates will *"be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic"*.

Clearly this attitude goes against the anarchist concept of '*the immediate abolition of the state*', a view espoused by the Clapham based Socialist Party. Agency is an active word, not a passive one. The ordered and democratic way in which the socialist revolution will be conducted means that the rest of society can carry on production and distribution in the safe knowledge that it will not be disrupted.

In conclusion, awareness of the problems caused by capitalism; awareness of class and class struggle; understanding and acceptance of the practical means to achieve political power and the active desire to establish Socialism makes someone a socialist. It is this level of political maturity which is required of someone wanting to join the S. P. G. B.

ORIGINS OF CAPITALISM

How did capitalism come into being? How were one set of social relations and form of private property ownership replaced with another? How was it that a class of workers came to be dependent on wages and salaries and forced to enter the labour market? How did employers obtain the power to coerce, exploit and hire and fire the workforce?

These questions were first posed by Karl Marx. He read accounts of the origins of capitalism, buying and selling and classes by John Locke and Adam Smith and Marx was not satisfied with their

explanations. Marx thought in historical terms. He was a social scientist, not a speculative philosopher. Commenting on Adam Smith's fabled account in **The Wealth of Nations** of the origins of capitalism, Marx wrote that it played about the same part as original sin in theology:

"The legend of the theological original sin tells us certainly how men came to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow; but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential Thus it came to pass that the former soul (the frugal) accumulated wealth and the latter soul (lazy rascals, spending their substance and more in riotous living) had at least nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the ... majority...and the wealth of the few"

(**Capital** Vol 1, Part VIII, Chapter XXVI , p.784 Kerr edition)
Marx goes on to say:

"Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in the defence of property. In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part"

(Ibid. , page 785)

In replying to Adam Smith and other defenders of capitalist social relations, Marx devoted a large section of **Capital** Volume I (Part VIII sketching out a factual account of capital's origin. He began with the origins of primitive accumulation; then next how agricultural workers were forced from the land and denied access to the commons; then how the state forced down wages by Act of Parliament. While this process was taking place Marx highlighted

the appearance of the capitalist farmer and the industrialist, finishing with the historical tendency of capitalist accumulation. It is a brilliant piece of history; a practical example of Marx's theory of history and of class struggle.

Marx then posed this problem. It can be shown how money is changed into capital. It can also be shown how through the movement of capital in the productive process (utilising labour power), surplus value is made. And it can be further shown how more capital is made from surplus value.

However the accumulation of capital pre-supposes surplus value (or exploitation of the workforce). Surplus value pre-supposes capitalist production; and capitalist production pre-supposes the pre-existence of considerable amounts of constant capital (raw materials, buildings, machinery etc.) and variable capital (capital to be used for wages etc.) in the hands of the employers. Marx asks how this vicious circle can be broken.

Marx's answer was that in themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than the means of social existence. They need to be transformed into capital. This transformation can only occur when two very different commodity owners meet each other in the market. The owner of money, the means of production and means of subsistence on the one hand and the owner of labour power on the other. That is when employers and employees meet each other on the labour market.

Marx shows that workers are "free" in two senses. Unlike feudal serfs, they are free from the ownership of the means of production. And they are also free to sell their ability to work to whichever

employer they want to, usually the highest bidder. Here then are the fundamental conditions for capitalist production as a historical process. There is no need for fictional accounts: no Adam or Eve, no Robinson Crusoe, no isolated man living in a state of nature exercising his "natural rights."

Marx's approach to the origins of capitalism also shows the difference in method between the socialist and the defender of capitalism. These capitalist apologists use universal philosophical abstractions like "freedom", "justice", "natural rights" etc. They present accounts of human beings and human thought in society which bear no resemblance to the real world we all live in - dwelling instead on continuity and permanence. Ideas are given a separate existence from the real, material conditions of human activity.

This approach is far removed from that adopted by Marx, Engels and other socialists. This historical and materialist approach to social systems, social relations and social conflict, comes from studying the real conditions of social existence. In human history there is discontinuity, impermanence and the revolutionary force of social change set in motion by the class struggle. The feet of the socialist then is firmly on the ground. Socialists are not lost in perfumed dreams of philosophy, metaphysics and theology. Socialists are not conditioned in their thinking by competition and exchange, a conditioning which gives an essentially anti-social view of the world. Socialist like Marx, are rooted in social labour; social co-operation and the belief that by coming to understand the world we can change it.

Whilst Marx demonstrated capitalism's origins, it still requires conscious political action by a socialist majority to ensure the termination of capitalism and the establishment of Socialism.

THE CHARITY SEASON

*"Christmas is coming, the geese are getting fat
Please to put a penny in the old man's hat
If you haven't got a penny, a ha'penny will do.
If you haven't got a ha'penny, then God bless you" (Trad)*

Midwinter - that time of the year again when every charity in the land makes its claim on your sympathy. Every misfortune known to man has its organised fund-raisers, all begging for cash. Poverty, homelessness and disease are examples of the problems that many charities try to deal with. But the best that can be said is that charities may mitigate or lessen the effects of these problems. **Charities do not and cannot solve these problems, most of which are intrinsic to the capitalist system.**

In capitalism, for example, food and housing are commodities. They have a price tag attached to them. Those who cannot afford the price have to go without. Homelessness and hunger are the consequences of the division of human society into two classes, rich and poor, haves and have-nots.

Charities cannot eliminate poverty. Nor are they able, even, to explain what are the real causes of such problems. The law forbids them from doing anything 'political'. Mostly the charities are content with this limitation. After all, since they depend on donations and legacies from the rich for the most part, they do not want to do anything which would upset their bigger donors. To point out that wealth and poverty are simply two sides of the same coin would be, to say the least, controversial.

Their role remains restricted to dealing with the effects. They do not even attempt to explain the real, underlying, causes of the problems about which they express so much concern. Whilst they try to patch up the wretched victims of this cruel system, they will not and cannot challenge the society which gives rise to the problems, thus exposing the underlying cause of hunger, homelessness, destitution etc.

The pennies and ha'pennies in their collecting tins, given from the purses of the needy and elderly, like the cheques donated by rich individuals and businesses (and offset against tax liabilities), will not solve these problems. At best they are an expression of sympathy and provide some mitigation. At worst they are capitalism's guilty conscience hindering the solution of these problems by helping to perpetuate capitalism as the only possible form of society in the minds of the working class. Charities are always saying that "something has to be done now", but they reject the one thing which will remove the problems they deal with: the **urgent need to establish Socialism**. The worthiest cause to give your efforts to!

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

of 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB,

has no connection with any other political party including the party using the same name based at 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN. Persons wishing to send donations, subscriptions etc. should make their cheques payable to

SOCIALIST STUDIES at

the above address 71 Ashbourne Court,
Woodside Park Rd. London N12 8SB

THE "SOCIALIST" PARTY & THE CASE FOR FEMINISM

We have received a letter from Mr. R. Russell who is the Secretary of the Glasgow Branch of the Clapham based Socialist Party. In our recent pamphlet **Women and Socialism** we commented on the following statement contained in the article 'The Beauty Myth' from the **Socialist Standard**, July 1993, published by Mr. Russell's party:

"Like the trade union movement the feminist movements of this century have been useful in fighting for improved conditions within the framework of capitalism".

Mr. Russell writes in defence of this statement: -

"I am sorry that although your quotation is correctly stated, I find your pamphleteer's interpretation of the quote rather strained. The phrase used may possibly lend itself to misunderstanding by someone who is determined to misunderstand There is none so blind as those will not see.

As I see it, the 'S.S.' writer's meaning is plain.

The claim is being made that the feminist movements can, like other social movements, for example, the Trades Union movement, obtain some improvements in conditions. However such successes are always under threat of sabotage or outright reversal. Having thus stated that such successes are, therefore, tenuous and can be nullified, the writer goes on to point out that "the real

solution to women's oppression" lies in the establishing of socialism.

There is no claim that the feminist movements are the same as the Trades Union movement, except insofar as they are both alike in being social movements.

Finally, I could quibble about the rosy picture painted of the success of the Trades Union movement. It is probably true that without the TU's the workers would be in a sorrier state than they are. But one would require a pair of rose-tinted specs to be unaware of the increasing deterioration of the position of large numbers of workers. The poverty of the 1990's may take on a different aspect from that of the 1840's but in many respects it would appear to be worse. Nominal wages are higher; real wages may be higher; but relative wages I suspect are much lower than say ten or twenty years ago."

In reply, we have to reject Mr. Russell's arguments regarding feminism, trade unions and the relative and absolute position of the working class. The Socialist Party of Great Britain has always recognised that the unions, however well organised, are the expression of the working class in the industrial struggle. As such, though often wrong in their policies and activities, they are part of the **class** conflict. Further the S.P.G.B holds that it is not the aim of socialists to fight for "*improved conditions within the framework of capitalism*". The object of socialists is the establishment of Socialism. Practically every politician, party and protest movement could claim that it aimed to "*obtain some improvements in conditions*" within the framework of capitalism. For example CND, road protesters, battered wives etc. Feminist proposals would not

revolutionise society, but merely aim to make capitalism work better for a section of the population. Feminist aims, if achieved, would not end the exploitation even of working class women - let alone working class men. They could even result in a greater exploitation of working class women.

As socialists are we to waste our time in supporting proposals that can be "*sabotaged or reversed*"? Precious time that could be usefully spent promoting Socialism? In 1911 the S.P.G.B. resolved to support only that which furthers our Object - Socialism. As stated in the July 1911 **Socialist Standard** the S.P.G.B. is the party with "*Socialism and nothing but Socialism as its object*".

We agree with Mr. Russell that the meaning of the writer of "The Beauty Myth" is plain. The writer supports the non socialist policy of improving the conditions of capitalism, praises feminists, and presumably would praise others *fighting for improved conditions within the framework of capitalism*. The quotation is an appeal to feminists to see the Clapham based Socialist Party as an ally; then as an afterthought the article puts the real solution - Socialism. This particular article should not just be seen in isolation; it should be seen against the background of other articles published by the Socialist Party (eg. "Herland", **Socialist Standard** March 1994).

Since the early 1980's the whole trend of the policy of the Socialist Party as expressed through its journal the Socialist Standard, has been to water down the case for socialism in an attempt to gain wider support. It praised the Polish reformist political organisation Solidarity. It has developed a reformist attitude as an attempt to find a shortcut to Socialism. It now holds the view that in the past the S.P.G.B. was wrong to distance itself from capitalism's day to

day issues. In fact the S P G B. has never attempted to deal with capitalism's problems, or to urge reform to make capitalism more palatable to the working class.

Reforms of capitalism cannot make the introduction of Socialism possible. What must be understood is that reforms "*within the framework of capitalism*" do not , and cannot change the basic situation. All reforms that have been carried through in the past have been of benefit to the capitalist system in one way or another. Whilst workers have undoubtedly benefited from some reforms, e.g. education, factory legislation, health etc., the prime motivation for carrying through these reforms was the smoother running of the capitalist system. Modern industry requires highly trained workers who are reasonably healthy and not off sick all the time. However as long as capitalism exists, the capitalist class (male and females), through its ownership of the means of life will always have the advantage. All reforms leave that position unchanged, and the working class, men and women, continue to be exploited.

In considering the position of the working class it is not just a question of nominal, real and relative wages; the relative size of the working class to that of the capitalist class must also be considered. However it is looked at, it cannot be denied that in material terms the British working class is far better off than it was in say the 1840's, and even the 1940's.

In 1865, Marx quoted that the bottom 80 per cent of the population received only 33 per cent of the national income. Phelps Brown in the **Economic Journal** (June 1952) recorded that wages and salaries for the years 1870 to 1913 averaged 57.6 per cent for 1924 to 1950 (excluding the war years) averaged 65.4 per cent of the

national income. By 1972, 80 per cent of the population received 57.3 per cent (**Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth**). The **Annual Abstract of Statistics** and **Monthly Digests**, inform us that the income of the working class (including the self-employed) had risen to 74.5 per cent in 1983 and was 75.4 per cent in 1993 and 73.1 per cent in 1994, (the latest published figures available in 1996).

Whilst these figures may not be directly comparable, taken over a long period they represent a considerable improvement for the working class as a whole. It is true that some sections of the working class are suffering great hardship, but socialists cannot take up sectional interests; socialists must fight for the emancipation of the working class as a whole.

Increased wages are usually only conceded by employers as a result of effective organisation by the workers, and when employers calculate that their profits will be reduced if the workers go on strike. It cannot be said that feminist movements have ever negotiated effectively on wages, conditions of work etc. nor are they in a position to do so. The fact that the working class share of the national income has risen over a period of years is largely due to their being effectively organised in trade unions.

In a postscript to his letter Mr Russell also writes:

"Re the article criticised. I believe the member who wrote it has since resigned on the grounds that she found the attitude of male members to female ones was incompatible with socialist principles. There's an irony for you. The writer of the [SPGB] pamphlet uses the article to imply that the Clapham party is riddled

with "feminism" while the writer of the "offending article" packs it in on the grounds that the members of the Clapham Party are all male chauvinists - anti women."

It is evident from the above statement that the writer of "The Beauty Myth" joined the Clapham based Socialist Party in the belief that it's members like herself were feminists. She found that some members were not and so she left. The point that Mr. Russell should recognise is that a socialist organisation would not have admitted the writer of "The Beauty Myth" or "Herland" into membership. Why did the Clapham party do it? It is part of their policy to broaden their political appeal. Such a policy can have one of two possible outcomes. Either as above the person resigns; or, the policy to gain a wider support through a divers membership takes root and the organisation becomes openly reformist. That appears to be the future for the Socialist Party as they continue along the same path they have been treading for some years - covertly reformist. Will they become the party advocating reform for "*improved conditions within the framework of capitalism*"? Like the Labour Party, they could not be both socialist and reformist at the same time.

THE SPGB & REFORMS

There are those who want the S.P.G.B. to support or oppose reforms, political or otherwise, "on their merits". This has always been rejected by the Party. The S.P.G.B. in its propaganda, has never advocated any reforms nor declared its support or opposition for reforms advocated by others.

The position was stated in the first issue of the **Socialist Standard** (now **Socialist Studies**) in September 1904. The question was over the Social Democratic Federation's support for "*free maintenance*" for school children.

We did not say that "free maintenance" for school children is a good or bad reform and therefore we support or oppose it. What we did say of the S.D.F. was:

"They are surely developing into a mere reform party seeking to obtain the provision of free maintenance for school children."

It was a reason for opposing the SDF, not a reason for supporting the reform. The Party's attitude to reforms was **not** based on the belief that all reforms "*are detrimental to working class interests*" (**Socialist Standard** July 1911), but on the principle that :

"The SPGB ... is the Party with Socialism and nothing but Socialism as its 'Object'." (Ibid.)

ECONOMIC & POLITICAL REFORMS

Most support for reforms, political or economic, derives from a complete failure to understand the economic laws of capitalism. This applies to those who have supported rent restriction, or

minimum wage laws, or free travel or so called 'free' additions to wages in the form of free food or housing etc.

Rent restriction for example simply operates to depress many wages. When Tory minister, Mr. Long, introduced Rent Restrictions in 1915, it was with this effect in mind - nothing to do with the improvement of the workers' conditions.

Minimum Wage laws, again fashionable with Mr. Blair's New Labour Party, have been totally useless to workers. If enforced, they destroy the jobs where the employers can only survive by paying very low wages. In reality minimum wages are also ignored despite the law. In the 1930's, the National Organiser of the Agricultural Workers' Union wrote to the S.P.G.B. saying that in his view, over half the landworkers were being paid less than the minimum. They preferred to keep their jobs rather than bring in the force of the law.

It is ironic the minimum wage legislation is now associated with the Labour Party and the so called 'left'. Winston Churchill, as Home Secretary, introduced minimum wage legislation. Churchill was hardly an advocate of working class interests. The Scottish Farm Servants' Union, in 1924, rightly refused to be included in the farm workers' minimum wage law.

Levels of wages, as shown by Marx, are determined by the market conditions, whether there is a trade depression or a boom. During a period of boom the workers are far more likely to be able gain an increase in wages, as the threat of industrial action means the threat to profitability. If the workers are well organised in unions, even in a depression they can to some extent resist downward pressure on

wages and salaries by employers and their politicians. Of course if there is no prospect of making profits then the capitalists put workers on short time or make them redundant.

It is pure illusion to suppose that so-called 'free' benefits are an addition to the wage. In the 19th century there were millions of workers on the land, in domestic service, retail trade and in offices who, in addition to their money wages, received free food or lodging, or both. (They lived in and got free food).

In agriculture you had three types of workers. Those who got neither food nor lodging earning 30 shillings a week (£1.50); those who got free food on 20 shillings (£1.00) a week; and those who lived in getting 10 shillings (£0.50) a week. There was only one wage, whether wholly in cash, or partly in cash and in kind. Those workers supposedly enjoying 'free' benefits, were in fact, the lowest paid of all workers because they were completely outside trade union organisation.

As unions developed they rightly insisted in getting rid of the 'benefit' system. As it was put in the Party, those workers who got the supposed benefit of 'free' additions had to fight all the harder to maintain the living wage.

THE FRANCHISE

The franchise is a special case. It was pointed out in the early Socialist Standards, that the S.P.G.B. was able to produce its Declarations of Principles in the form it still has, because in Great Britain (unlike many other countries at the time) the majority of votes were held by the workers.

It was assumed that as capitalism developed, that other countries would eventually produce the same situation. This view has proved to be correct.

Today almost all the countries in the world have votes for workers. In some countries like Australia, far from depriving workers of the vote, the government makes voting compulsory. The S.P.G.B. in its 1978 version of the pamphlet **Questions of the Day**, offered the following statement about less developed countries. The workers: *"...besides trying to organise into a Socialist Party ought also to struggle to get the freedom to organise into trade unions and win elementary political rights. As in the advanced capitalist countries, however, this should still involve opposition to all other parties in order that the Socialist issue shall be kept free from confusion."*

It should be remembered that the main difficulty confronting the socialist is not due to the conditions under which they operate, but in getting across socialist ideas to a non receptive working class. In Britain and America, where there is the franchise with little restriction on socialist meetings and publication of literature, socialists still face an enormous task. The forms of government are of minor concern to socialists as indeed they are to the vast bulk of the working class who are more interested in jobs, wages and prices than in politics. The struggle to make capitalism more democratic with so-called political reforms is non socialist and reformist, and cannot be supported by socialists as it deflects effort away from our objective - Socialism.

The pre-requisite for Socialism is the struggle for working class understanding of capitalism as a whole. That and that alone, is the political manifestation of the class struggle.

COMRADE MEIRION DAVIES

OBITUARY

We regret to report that Comrade Meirion Davies died in hospital on the 17th October 1996 after an illness that had limited his party work over the last few years. Born in 1919 in Wales, his love of the Welsh countryside and the outdoor life remained with him to his death. During the war he was drafted as a 'Bevin Boy' into the coal mines of Yorkshire, although the Welsh mines were almost on his doorstep.

He was introduced to the socialist case after hours of discussion with a member of the S.P.G.B., and he and his wife Doreen, joined the old Paddington Branch in 1949, so began a political partnership that spanned some 47 years. He served on the E.C. for some 2 years but did not find it his cup of tea.

When North West London Branch and Camden (Bloomsbury) Branch were expelled from what had become The Socialist Party in 1991, he had no hesitation in throwing in his lot with the newly reconstituted Socialist Party of Great Britain, and he was one of those present when the party was relaunched on 11th June 1991. He was our literature secretary for many years and always ensured a good supply of Party literature at meetings and events. Although not a speaker, and a rather quiet man, in private conversation he could be very persuasive with the socialist case. He was a gentle and tolerant person, but one who could be roused to some passion if the credentials of the party were challenged. His interests included gardening and music, especially opera. Our sympathies go to Doreen his wife, and his daughter Helen. We shall miss him.

A SEASON OF PROPAGANDA GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT

Publishing and distributing literature is not an easy thing. Our literature to have impact should find its way into the hands of non socialists. In this connection we have had a fairly successful year. A number of books left to us by Comrades Hardy and Young have been sold at our meetings and more were sold at the May Day Festival on Clapham Common held in perfect weather. Sales of both books and our literature came to £44.90. At the Tolpuddle Rally in Dorset, sales amounted to £84.03, and a large number of leaflets were distributed. In our opinion, on both occasions our stall was far superior to that of the Clapham based Socialist Party, and we suspect our sales were the highest.

A number of conferences have also been covered this year (1996), and the Clapham party was conspicuous by its absence from them: Brighton, Bournemouth, Blackpool and Eastbourne were visited by our London members and those residing in these areas. Sales of £88 were recorded. A conference held in the middle of November in Brighton was entitled "Violence, Abuse and Women's Citizenship", and was attended by delegates of over 27 countries. 5 of our members were able to spend some time over a couple of days distributing literature with good results. Total sales amounted to £63.70 and included 110 copies of our new **Women & Socialism** pamphlet which will soon require a reprint. A number of successful meetings have also been held in Hyde Park, receipts and donations amounting to £38.36. Any offer to help distribute our literature will be gratefully accepted, especially as an election looms. Can you help spread the socialist message? Please contact the Secretary.

FURTHER LITERATURE AVAILABLE

Socialist Studies - our official journal

Issues Nos: 1 - 21 • 50p each

Socialist Principles Explained

The Object and Declaration of Principles
25 p.p. Pamphlet 75p

Banking & Credit Myths

A Socialist View 60p

Socialist's Handbook 75p

Questions of the Day pamphlets: - 50p each

No.1. Inflation: Cause and Effects

No.2. Unemployment and Recessions.

No.3. Marx - Modern History and Economics.

No.4. The Socialist Party of Great Britain and the Trade Unions.

No.5. Why Socialists oppose the Labour Party.

No.6. The Continuing Trade War.

The Materialist Conception of History Price £1

Our pamphlet looks at the theory of the MCH
and relates it to 20th Century Capitalism.

Women and Socialism Price 80p (stamps will do)

Our pamphlet deals with the question of the involvement of
women (on a class basis) in the struggle for Socialism.

War and Capitalism Price £1

A new addition to our range of literature examining the cause
of war and the Socialist opposition

ALL PRICES
ARE
INCLUSIVE
OF
POSTAGE

LITERATURE - SPECIAL OFFER

For an in-depth study of the case of
The Socialist Party of Great Britain
we have a special offer.

A full set of our journal nos. 1-21 and a complete set of all our
pamphlets (12 in all) at the reduced price of £9.

ORDERS TO OUR HEAD OFFICE.

71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road, London N12 8SB

(Please make cheques payable to SOCIALIST STUDIES).

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCH

meets at 7.30 pm on the 1st and 3rd Mondays in month at
Abbey Community Centre, Belsize Road, London NW6.

Secretary C. May, 71 Ashbourne Court, Woodside Park Road,
London N12 8SB

CAMDEN / BLOOMSBURY BRANCH

meets at 6 pm on the 4th Tuesday of month at
Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1

Correspondence to the Secretary, S.P.G.B., 31 Caernarvon Road,
Eynsbury, St. Neots, Cambs. PE19 2RN (Tel: 01480 403345)

All meetings are open to the public and visitors are welcome.
Those wishing to find out more about the Party and its activities
should contact the Secretary.

LECTURE SERIES 1997

Continuing on our successful 1996 Winter Series, we shall recommence
lectures in 1997 on the following provisional dates.

Subjects, speakers and dates have yet to be finalised but full details will
be available in a leaflet in due course. Please let us know if you would
like a copy.

Sunday 26 January

Sunday 9 February

Sunday 23

Sunday 9 March

Sunday 23

Sunday 13 April

All meetings commence at 3 p.m.
Venue:- Marchmont Community Centre,
62 Marchmont Street, London WC1
(5 minutes from Russell Square Tube Station)
ADMISSION FREE - QUESTIONS - DISCUSSION